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ZERO OPTION SEEN BEHIND REAGAN'S OPEN LETTER

Appeal 'Empty Rhetoric'

LD032143 Moscow Domestic Television Service in Russian 1545 GMT 3 Feb 83

[From "The World Today" program presented by Valentin Zorin]

[Text] Hello, comrades. As yesterday, the main theme of comment in the papers, radio and television of foreign countries is the replies of Yuriy Vladimirovich Andropov to the questions from a PRAVDA correspondent. Articles and commentaries are devoted to this theme by practically all organs of the foreign press. I shall not attempt to quote from such commentaries; there are literally hundreds of them. But I shall try to generalize about the main contents.

The first thing that catches the eye is the fact that the precise position of the Soviet leader, with no ambiguities whatsoever, regarding the problem of medium-range nuclear missiles has created a very great impression throughout the world. Today's commentaries note that on the one hand, the Soviet Union has again confirmed its willingness to come to mutually acceptable agreements on the basis of the principle of equality and equal security of the sides, and on the other, unambiguously stressed the total unacceptability for the Soviet Union of Reagan's notorious zero option. Most commentators quote Comrade Andropov's statement that the Soviet Union will not undertake unilateral disarmament. If matters go as far as the deployment of the new U.S. missiles in Europe, we shall respond to this in a suitable manner. But this would not be our choice.

Concerning the appeal by the U.S. President to the peoples of Europe in which he proposed that the Soviet Union and the United States sign, on American conditions, an agreement to scrap land-based medium-range missiles, many political observers agree that this is not a constructive proposal which could form the basis for serious negotiations, but purely a propaganda gesture. The same aim, in the opinion of political observers, is being pursued in the President's sensationalized appeal for an immediate meeting between Yuriy Vladimirovich Andropov and Ronald Reagan to sign the agreement proposed by the Americans. This proposal, which is restricted by conditions that are known to be unacceptable, as many commentators point out today, is no more than a gesture made for effect, aimed at leading world public opinion astray. Forgetting about gestures, but really to come to the point, if Washington wants real progress in the Soviet-American talks, its leading figures, instead of clinging to the notorious zero option which is known to be unacceptable, ought to reply to the question: Are they ready seriously to discuss the considered and realistic proposals of the Soviet Union?

An NBC television commentator spoke out quite frankly about the aims being pursued by the U.S. President in sending Vice President Bush on a tour of Western Europe, and in making public his appeal through Bush. In his foreign policy statements, the American television commentator says, the Soviet leader Andropov has got the upper hand over President Reagan by coming out in favor of a compromise at the talks. Reagan now has to convince the Europeans that he is not a rascal who is preventing the achievement of an agreement and that his administration wants such an agreement. But the observer adds that to achieve this aim, Reagan would have to withdraw from his zero option.

Ever since Vice President Bush, to everyone's surprise, pulled from his pocket the text of the President's appeal to the peoples of Europe during his speech in West Berlin and read it to those assembled, this has been deliberately sensationalized by the Western mass media. [shots of Bush delivering Berlin speech] However, already the impression has been created that the planned sensation did not take place. Washington did not succeed, according to what the papers are writing today, in taking the diplomatic initiative away from the Soviet Union.

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